

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

October 10, 1996 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

The following is from a new book I am completing called **HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD: A Commentary on the Hard Sayings and Seeming Contradictions in the Bible**, by David W. Cloud, copyright 1996 --

MARK 16:15-16 -- "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Many attempt to use this passage to prove baptismal regeneration or the necessity of baptism for salvation, but it proves no such thing. By comparing Scripture with Scripture, we know that it is faith that saves, and baptism is the symbol and evidence of one's faith. A careful reading of Mark 16:16 confirms this. It does not say that those who are not baptized shall be damned; it says those who do not believe will be damned. When the Philippian jailer asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul did not reply that he needed to believe and be baptized. He replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:30-31). After the jailer believed on Christ, he was baptized that same night, but it was only the product of his salvation. Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit BEFORE they were baptized (Acts 10:43-48), and the Holy Spirit is the mark and seal of sonship and salvation (Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:11-12). If baptism were a part of salvation, the Apostle Paul would not have said, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 1:17). Baptism is not part of the Gospel that Paul preached. See 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. In this passage Paul declared the Gospel "in a nutshell," and there is no mention of baptism. Paul's Gospel message was also summarized in Acts 20:21--"repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Again, there is no word about baptism. Baptism is important, but it follows salvation and is not a part of the Gospel. When Paul explained how to be saved in Romans chapter 10, he again said nothing about baptism:

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:9-13).

We believe the passage in Mark 16:15-16 is a powerful testimony to the importance of baptism and to the fact that it is one of the key evidences of salvation. A person who says he believes in

the Lord Jesus Christ but who does not want to submit to baptism is probably deceiving himself. Baptism itself, though, is not a part of salvation.

ACTS 2:38 -- "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Acts 2:38, standing alone, could mean either that baptism RESULTS IN the remission of sins, or it could mean that baptism is BECAUSE OF the remission of sins already obtained through faith. Comparing Scripture with Scripture, we know that the true meaning is the latter. Those who repent and trust the Lord Jesus Christ receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life and the Holy Spirit, and baptism signifies this spiritual reality.

Ephesians 1:13 plainly states that the Holy Spirit is received by trusting the Lord Jesus Christ. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."

The Lord Jesus Christ also taught that the Holy Spirit is given to those who believe in Him. "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, WHICH THEY THAT BELIEVE ON HIM SHOULD RECEIVE: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)" (John 7:38,39).

See commentary on Mark 16:15; Acts 22:16; and 1 Peter 3:21.

ACTS 22:16 -- "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Acts 22:16, standing alone, could mean either that baptism washes away sins, or it could mean that calling on the name of the Lord washes away sins. Comparing Scripture with Scripture, we know that the true meaning is the latter. Romans 10:13 says whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. There is absolutely no mention of baptism in Romans 10. Those who repent and trust the Lord Jesus Christ receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life, and baptism signifies this spiritual reality.

See commentary on Mark 16:15; Acts 2:38; and 1 Peter 3:21.

1 PETER 3:21 -- "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:"

This verse shows the error of baptismal regeneration. Baptism is a figure, a symbol, a picture. Baptism is not a part of salvation; it is symbolic of salvation. We are saved, not by water going over our bodies, but by faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.